

As the Service component commander, the Marine Corps component commander represents MAGTF interests at various joint force boards. He will participate on joint force boards along with any functional component commander the MAGTF may be supporting. Consequently, the MAGTF must keep the Marine Corps component commander informed of operational matters to ensure relevant and contextual representation at the various joint boards.

Component Command Relationships and Staff Organization

This difference in orientation is the result of the joint force commander's organization of forces and each subordinate commander's place in the operational chain of command and the assigned mission. This placement, in turn, determines the people and agencies with whom the Marine Corps component and MAGTF commanders must interact.

The Marine Corps component commander—who translates strategic objectives into operational objectives—must interact up the chain of command with the joint force commander, laterally with other component commanders, and down to his MAGTF commander. The MAGTF commander—who translates operational objectives into tactical actions—must interact up the chain of command with the Marine Corps component commander, laterally with adjacent tactical commanders, and down to his subordinate commanders. The Marine Corps component commander assigns the MAGTF commander missions that may accomplish objectives at both the operational and tactical levels of war when the joint force is organized on a Service component basis.

The difference in orientation of the Marine Corps component commander and the MAGTF commander also has an important influence on the Marine Corps component-MAGTF command relationship and the staff organization adopted by the Marine Corps component commander. The Marine Corps component-MAGTF command relationship and staff organization that the Marine Corps component commander selects depends on the mission, size, scope, and duration of the operation and the size of the assigned force. Three possible command relationships and staff organizations are: one commander with one staff, one commander with two staffs, and two commanders and two staffs. See MCDP 1-0.1.

THE MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE

The Marine Corps task-organizes for operations consistent with its statutory tasking to “. . . provide forces of combined arms, including aviation . . .” by forming MAGTFs. The MAGTF is a balanced, air-ground combined arms task

organization of Marine Corps forces under a single commander, structured to accomplish a specific mission. It is the Marine Corps' principal organization for all missions across the range of military operations. It is designed to fight, while having the ability to prevent conflicts and control crises. All MAGTFs are task-organized and vary in size and capability according to the assigned mission, threat, and battlespace environment. See figure 3-4, page 3-12. They are specifically tailored for rapid deployment by air or sea and ideally suited for a forward presence role. A MAGTF provides the naval, joint or multinational commander with a readily available force capable of operating as—

- The landing force of an amphibious task organization.
- A land force in sustained operations ashore.
- A land force or the landward portion of a naval force conducting MOOTW such as noncombatant evacuations, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief or the tactical recovery of an aircraft or aircrew.
- A forward-deployed force providing a strong deterrence in a crisis area.
- A force conducting training with allied forces as part of a theater engagement plan.

Capabilities

MAGTFs provide joint force commanders with the capability to—

- Move forces into crisis areas without revealing their exact destinations or intentions.
- Provide continuous presence in international waters.
- Provide immediate national response in support of humanitarian and natural disaster relief operations.
- Provide credible combat power in a nonprovocative posture, just over the horizon of a potential adversary, for rapid employment as the initial response to a crisis.
- Support diplomatic processes for peaceful crisis resolution before employing immediately responsive combat forces.
- Project measured degrees of combat power ashore, day or night, and under adverse weather conditions, if required.
- Introduce additional forces sequentially into a theater of operations.
- Operate independent of established airfields, basing agreements, and overflight rights.
- Conduct operations ashore using organic combat service support brought into the AO.

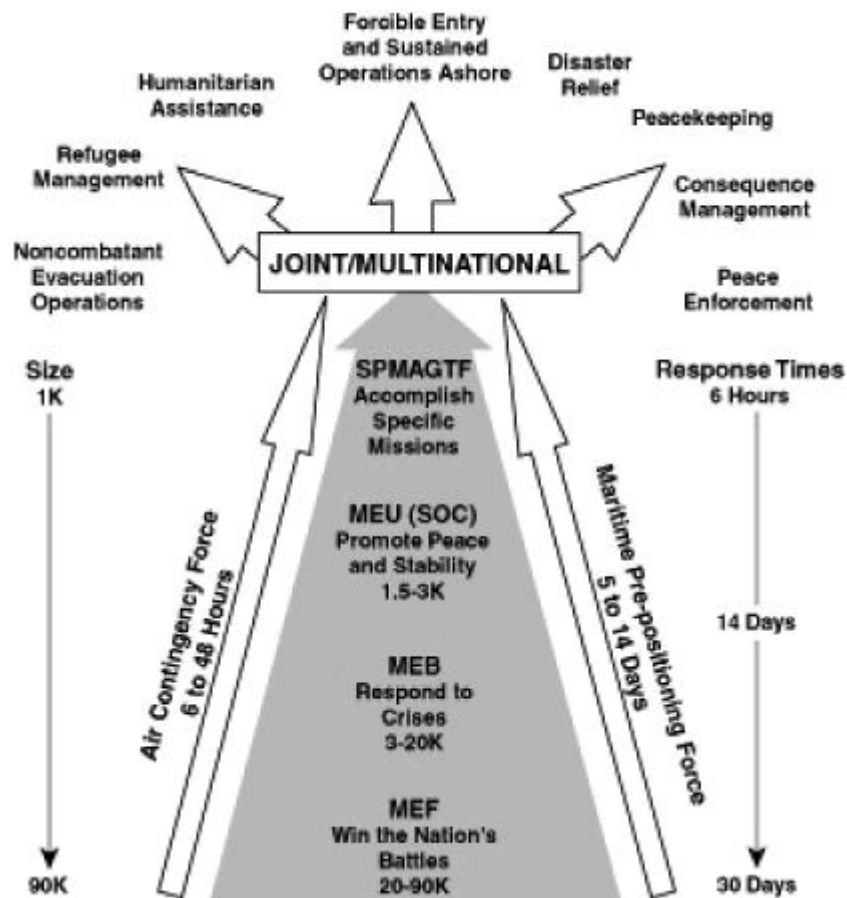


Figure 3-4. Marine Air-Ground Task Forces.

- Enable the introduction of follow-on forces by securing staging areas ashore.
- Operate in rural and urban environments.
- Operate under nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare conditions.
- Withdraw rapidly at the conclusion of operations.
- Participate fully in the joint planning process and successfully integrate MAGTF operations with those of the joint force.

Elements

All MAGTFs are expeditionary by design and comprised of four core elements: a command element (CE), a ground combat element (GCE), an aviation combat



Figure 3-5. MAGTF Organization.

element (ACE), and a combat service support element (CSSE). See figure 3-5. The MAGTF's combat forces reside within these four elements. Although MAGTFs will differ because of mission and forces assigned, a standard procedure exists for organization, planning, and operations.

As a modular organization, the MAGTF is tailorable to each mission through task organization. This building block approach also makes reorganization a matter of routine. In addition to the Marine Corps units, MAGTFs may have attached forces from other Services and nations; e.g., naval construction force, multiple launch rocket system batteries, and armor brigades.

A key feature of Marine expeditionary organization is expandability. Crisis response requires the ability to expand the expeditionary force after its introduction in theater without sacrificing the continuity of operational capability. The MAGTF's modular structure lends itself to rapid expansion into a larger force as a situation demands by simply adding forces as needed to the core units of each existing element. This expandability includes expanding into a joint or multinational force because the MAGTF structure parallels the structure of a multidimensional joint force. Operation Restore Hope in Somalia is an example of the expandability of the MAGTF. This contingency began with the employment of a MEU (special operations capable) (MEU[SOC]) to seize the port and airport in Mogadishu, enabling the deployment of elements of I MEF via air and MPS, with the MEF eventually employing a brigade-sized force to provide security and humanitarian relief to the Somalis.

On missions where Marine forces are not deployed as part of a MAGTF (such as the Chemical/Biological Incident Response Force), Marine security forces, or

forces assigned to battle forest fires, the Marine Corps component commander plays an increasingly important role in ensuring the Marine forces are properly equipped, trained, and employed. Marine forces deployed as a MAGTF are normally employed by the joint force commander as a MAGTF. As a task-organized force, the MAGTF's size and composition depend on the committed mission. If a MAGTF is deprived of a part of its combat forces, accomplishment of the mission for which it is tailored is jeopardized. However, on a day-to-day basis, the MAGTF may be tasked to conduct operations in support of another force and will identify capabilities; e.g., air sorties, beach and port operations, and civil affairs, excess to its mission requirements to the joint force commander that may be of use to other components of the joint force.

Command Element

The CE is the MAGTF headquarters. As with all other MAGTF elements, it is task-organized to provide the command and control capabilities necessary for effective planning, execution, and assessment of operations across the warfighting functions. Additionally, the CE can exercise command and control within a joint force from the sea or ashore and act as a core element around which a joint task force headquarters may be formed, provide interagency coordination for MOOTW, and conduct "reach back." The six warfighting functions are: command and control, intelligence, maneuver, fires, logistics, and force protection.

A CE may include additional command and control and intelligence capabilities from national assets and theater, force reconnaissance company assets, signals intelligence capabilities from the radio battalion, and a force fires coordination center. A CE can employ additional major subordinate commands such as the force field artillery headquarters, naval construction regiments, or Army maneuver or engineering units.

Ground Combat Element

The GCE is task-organized to conduct ground operations, project combat power, and contribute to battlespace dominance in support of the MAGTF's mission. It is formed around an infantry organization reinforced with artillery, reconnaissance, assault amphibian, tank, and engineer forces. The GCE can vary in size and composition from a rifle platoon to one or more Marine divisions. It is the only element that can seize and occupy terrain.

Aviation Combat Element

The ACE is task-organized to conduct air operations, project combat power, and contribute to battlespace dominance in support of the MAGTF's mission by performing some or all of the six functions of Marine aviation: antiair warfare,

assault support, electronic warfare, offensive air support, air reconnaissance, and control of aircraft and missiles. It is formed around an aviation headquarters with air control agencies, aircraft squadrons or groups, and combat service support units. It can vary in size and composition from an aviation detachment of specifically required aircraft to one or more Marine aircraft wings. The ACE may be employed from ships or forward expeditionary land bases and can readily transition between sea bases and land bases without loss of capability. It has the capability of conducting command and control across the battlespace.

Combat Service Support Element

The CSSE is task-organized to provide all functions of tactical logistics necessary to support the continued readiness and sustainability of the MAGTF. The six functions of tactical logistics are: supply, maintenance, transportation, health services, engineering, and other services which include legal, exchange, food, disbursing, postal, billeting, religious, mortuary, and morale and recreation services. See MCWP 4, *Logistics*, for a detailed discussion. The CSSE is formed around a combat service support headquarters and may vary in size and composition from a support detachment to one or more force service support groups. The CSSE, operating from sea bases or from expeditionary bases established ashore, enables sustainment of forces, thus extending MAGTF's capabilities in time and space. It may be the main effort of the MAGTF during humanitarian assistance missions or selected phases of MPF operations.

Supporting Establishment

The supporting establishment is often referred to as the "fifth element of the MAGTF." It is vital to the success of Marine Corps forces conducting expeditionary operations. It recruits, trains, equips, and sustains Marines enabling them to conduct expeditionary operations in increasingly complex and dangerous environments. Bases and stations of the supporting establishment provide the training areas, ranges, and the modeling and simulation facilities necessary to prepare Marines and their units for combat. These posts of the Corps serve as staging and marshalling areas for deploying units and often are the CONUS end of a responsive replacement, supply, and new equipment pipeline into the AO. The Marines, sailors, and civilians of the supporting establishment are true partners with the Marines of the operating forces in accomplishing the mission.

Bases and stations of the supporting establishment also provide facilities and support to the families of deployed Marines, allowing Marines to concentrate fully on their demanding missions without undue concern for the welfare of their families.

Types

MAGTFs are integrated combined arms forces structured to accomplish specific missions. MAGTFs are generally categorized in the following four types.

Marine Expeditionary Force

The MEF is the Marine Corps' principal warfighting organization. It can conduct and sustain expeditionary operations in any geographic environment. MEFs are the sole standing MAGTFs; e.g., they exist in peacetime as well as wartime. Size and composition can vary greatly depending on the requirements of the mission. A MEF is normally commanded by a lieutenant general. It can be comprised of—

- A standing command element.
- A GCE of one or more divisions.
- An ACE of one or more aircraft wings.
- A CSSE of one or more force service support groups.

A MEF not only deploys and commands its own units, but also units from other MEFs, the Marine Corps Forces Reserve, other Services and nations, and the Special Operations Command. It typically deploys by echelon with 60 days of sustainment, but can extend operations with external support from other United States Services or through host-nation support agreements. The MEF commander and his staff can form the nucleus for a joint task force or functional component headquarters.

A MEF nominally consists of a permanent CE as well as a tailored Marine division, Marine aircraft wing, and Marine force service support group. Each MEF deploys a MEU(SOC) on a continuous basis to provide forward presence and crisis response capabilities to the combatant commanders. There are three standing MEFs:

- I MEF, based in southern California and Arizona, assigned to CINCUSPACOM.
- II MEF, based in North Carolina and South Carolina, assigned to CINCUSJFCOM.
- III MEF, based in Okinawa, mainland Japan, and Hawaii, assigned to CINCUSPACOM.

Marine Expeditionary Brigade

The Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB) is the “middle-weight” MAGTF. It is a crisis response force capable of forcible entry and enabling the introduction of follow-on forces. It can serve as part of a joint or multinational force and can provide the nucleus of a joint task force headquarters. It is unique in that it is the smallest MAGTF with a fully capable aviation element that performs all six functions of Marine aviation and is self-sustaining for 30 days. A MEB is capable of rapid deployment and employment deploying either by air, in combination with the MPS, or by amphibious shipping.

As a result, the MEB can conduct the full range of combat operations and may serve as the lead echelon of the MEF. The MEB is not a standing organization, but rather imbedded within the MEF. As a result, MEBs are task-organized for specific missions from within the assets of the MEF. The MEB conducts the mission or prepares for the subsequent arrival of the rest of the MEF or other joint or multinational forces. However, the deployment of a MEB does not necessarily mean that all the forces of the MEF will follow. Currently, the 1st, 2d, and 3d MEBs have been designated within I, II, and III MEF and are commanded by the deputy MEF commanders or other general officers. A MEB notionally consists of the following elements:

- A CE that may include additional assets such as command and control, force reconnaissance company, signals intelligence capabilities from the radio battalion, and engineering capabilities from the naval construction regiments. It can also control the forces of other Services and nations in missions ranging from combat in an urban area to disaster relief.
- A GCE composed of an infantry regiment reinforced with artillery, reconnaissance, engineer, light armored reconnaissance units, assault amphibian units, and other attachments as required.
- An ACE composed of a Marine aircraft group comprised of combat assault transport helicopter, utility and attack helicopters, vertical/short takeoff and landing fixed-wing attack aircraft, air refuelers/transport aircraft, and other detachments as required.
- A CSSE task-organized around a brigade service support group. This element has engineering, supply, transportation, landing support for beach, port and airfield delivery, medical, and maintenance capabilities.

The 4th MEB (AT) provides the unified combatant commanders with a rapidly deployable and sustainable specialized antiterrorism force to deter, detect, and defend against terrorist actions and conduct initial incident response to combat the threat of terrorism worldwide. See page 1-20.

Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)

The MEU(SOC) is the standard forward-deployed Marine expeditionary organization. A forward-deployed MEU(SOC) provides an immediate sea-based response to meet forward presence and power projection requirements. A MEU(SOC) is commanded by a colonel and deploys with 15 days of supplies. It is normally comprised of—

- A CE that may include additional assets such as command and control, force reconnaissance company, and signals intelligence capabilities from the radio battalion.
- A GCE comprised of an infantry battalion reinforced with artillery, reconnaissance, engineer, tanks, light armored reconnaissance units, assault amphibian units, and other attachments as required.
- An ACE comprised of a combat assault transport helicopter squadron reinforced with utility and attack helicopters, vertical/short takeoff and landing fixed-wing attack aircraft, air refuelers/transport aircraft, and other detachments as required.
- A CSSE task-organized around a MEU service support group. This element has engineering, supply, transportation, landing support, medical, and maintenance capabilities.

A forward-deployed MEU(SOC) operates continuously in the Mediterranean Sea, the western Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean or Arabian Gulf region. Embarked aboard a Navy amphibious squadron, the MEU(SOC) provides a combatant commander or other operational commander a quick, sea-based reaction force for a wide variety of missions such as limited forcible entry operations, noncombatant evacuations, raids, or disaster relief. In many cases, the MEU embarked on amphibious shipping may be the first United States force at the scene of a crisis and can enable the actions of larger follow-on forces. It can provide a visible and credible presence in potential trouble spots and can demonstrate the United States' willingness to protect its interests overseas. While the MEU(SOC) is not a special operations force per se, it can support special operations forces and execute certain maritime special operations missions. These include reconnaissance and surveillance; specialized demolitions; tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel; seizure/recovery of offshore energy facilities; seizure/recovery of selected personnel or material; visit, board, search, and seizure of vessels; and in extremis hostage recovery.

Prior to deployment, the MEU(SOC) undergoes an intensive 6-month training program focusing on its conventional and selected maritime special operations missions. Training culminates with a thorough evaluation and certification as

“special operations capable.” To receive this certification, a MEU must demonstrate competence across the entire spectrum of required capabilities, be able to plan and execute any assigned mission within 6 hours of notification, and conduct multiple missions simultaneously. Inherent capabilities of a MEU(SOC) are divided into four broad categories:

- Amphibious operations.
- Direct action operations.
- MOOTW.
- Supporting operations.

The complete list of capabilities subcategories for the MEU(SOC) is found in Marine Corps Order 3120.9A, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU[SOC])*.

Special Purpose MAGTF

A special purpose MAGTF is a nonstanding MAGTF temporarily formed to conduct a specific mission for which a MEF or other unit is either inappropriate or unavailable. They are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct such a mission. Special purpose MAGTFs have been deployed for a wide variety of missions such as humanitarian relief and coalition training. Designation of a special purpose MAGTF is based on the mission it is assigned (“Special Purpose MAGTF Hurricane Relief”), the location in which it will operate (“Special Purpose MAGTF Somalia”) or the name of the exercise in which it will participate (“Special Purpose MAGTF Unitas”).

A special purpose MAGTF may be of any size—but normally no larger than a MEU—with narrowly focused capabilities required to accomplish a particular mission. It may be task-organized from nondeployed Marine Corps forces or formed on a contingency basis from a deployed MAGTF. Regimental-level headquarters often assume the role as a special MAGTF CE and may conduct training in anticipated mission skills prior to establishment. A special purpose MAGTF may be deployed using commercial shipping or aircraft, strategic airlift, amphibious shipping or organic Marine aviation.

An important type of special purpose MAGTF is the air contingency force (ACF). An ACF is an on-call, task-organized alert force that is maintained by all three MEFs. An ACF can deploy within 18 hours of notification. It can be dispatched virtually worldwide to respond to a rapidly developing crisis. The ACF is the MEF’s force in readiness. It can deploy independently or in conjunction with amphibious forces, MPFs, or other expeditionary forces.